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THE LETTERS AND LIBRARIES of IRVING S. CUTTER AND HARVEY CUSHING[1]

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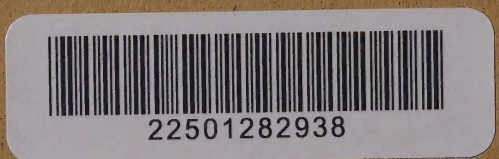


THE LETTERS AND LIBRARIES of IRVING S. CUTTER AND HARVEY CUSHING[1]

WELLCOME LIBRARY INSTITUTE

JOHN F. FULTON, M.D.

N ATTEMPTING to portray the life of any man whose friends and interests were innumerable, it is impossible to dwell on more than a chosen few. This has been notably true of Harvey Cushing on whose biography I have been engaged for nearly six years, and since it is no doubt also true of Irving Cutter, the study of their letters to one another has proved interesting. Cushing's correspondence was voluminous, for he had exchanges with many in his own profession here and in Europe and his wide interests also brought him into touch with men and women in other walks of life. His correspondence with William Welch would in itself fill a large volume, and the letters that passed between him and his friend Arnold Klebs in Switzerland occupy four large quartos. With Irving S. Cutter he likewise had an illuminating correspondence, for although their specialties differed, they had a deep-running interest in common—old books. Both were ardent collectors and each developed a healthy respect for the other's resourcefulness in obtaining rare and unusual works. The letters back and forth about their William Harvey collections, also early holdings in the field of gynecology and obstetrics, form a revealing sidelight on the avocations and personalities of the two men.

It is not entirely clear when Cushing and Cutter first met, but they had no doubt often encountered one another at surgical gatherings. In June 1928 Cushing read a paper in Minneapolis before the Opthalmological Section of the American Medical Association. On his way out, and possibly also on his return trip, he had stopped to see Dr. Cutter's library and was much stirred by the collection. "I have just reached home after a week's absence [he wrote on 14 June], during which time I saw nothing which gave me a greater thrill than your library and books, and no one I was more pleased to encounter than yourself." Dr. Cutter had meanwhile, on 11 June, sent Cushing a copy of his bookplate, together with that of the Archibald Church Library, which Cushing had evidently requested. A few days later Cushing wrote:

H.C. to Irving S. Cutter *29 June 1928.*

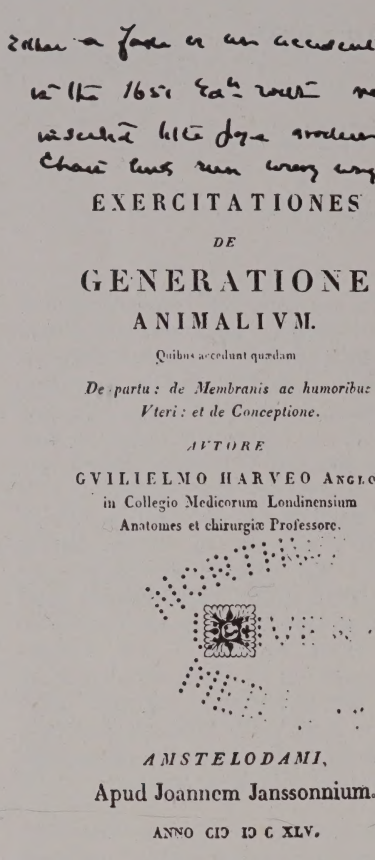
Dear Cutter—I wonder if without too much trouble you could send me a couple of photostatic prints of that 1645 Amsterdam Harvey that you showed me which appears to be a unique copy? I find that neither Fisher nor Keynes in his recent bibliography had cognizance of this issue.

Perhaps the Crerar people could make a photostat for me, if you could trust the volume out of your hands for that purpose. I shall of course want to meet any expenses that may be incurred. You see what your bibliographical enthusiasm has brought you to!

Cutter responded with characteristic promptness, sending a print of the title page of the unrecorded 1645 Harvey *De generatione* (fig. 1). With the instincts of a bookish sleuth, Cutter remarked: "I cannot account for the date other than that the printer made a typographical error. I would appreciate advice as to your findings." A question of this sort was grist to Cushing's bibliographical mill, and he immediately put the question to Geoffrey Keynes, who had just issued his bibliography of William Harvey in

[1]From the Historical Library, Yale University School of Medicine.

[2]Sterling Professor of Physiology, Yale University School of Medicine, since 1930; President and Chairman, Executive Committee, Association of Honorary Consultants, Army Medical Library; Executive Committee, Division of Medical Sciences, National Research Council.


EXERCITATIONES

DE

GENERATIONE

ANIMALIVM.

Quibus accedunt quædam

De partu: de Membranis ac humoribus Uteri: et de Conceptione.

AVTORE

GVILIELMO HARVEO Anglo.

in Collegio Medicorum Londinensium

Anatomes et chirurgiæ Professore.

AMSTELODAMI,

Apud Joannem Janssonnium.

ANNO CIↃ IↃ C XLV.

Fig. 1. Title-page of Dr. Cutter's copy of Harvey's De generatione carrying the imprint of Amsterdam, 1645—evidently a printer's error or a later forgery.

connection with the celebration that year of the 300th anniversary of the publication of Harvey's great book.

H.C. to Irving S. Cutter *12 July 1928.*

Dear Cutter: I am hugely obliged for sending me so many of those photographic copies of your 1645 copy of the *De Generatione*. I have sent one of them to Keynes to ask if he could give us any information about it. I presume you have seen his Bibliography of the Writings of Harvey which has just been issued by the Cambridge Press—an excellent piece of work. However, it is inevitable that such a study should contain a good many errors and omissions. If it did not, there would not be half as much fun in bibliography as the subject permits. The cross-word puzzle is nothing to it.

I saw a note in the London *Times* to the effect that there was a 1650 (I believe) copy of the *De generatione* in the Bodleian which also antedates the issues which Keynes lists.

Always with warm regards (with accent on the *warm* for it is about ninety here today. I hope you will be doing better in Chicago).

Keynes meanwhile replied:

Geoffrey Keynes to H.C. *London, 19 July 1928.*

Dear Dr. Cushing, Thank you for your very nice letter. And I am much interested by your discovery. I cannot explain it, however; 1651 has always been accepted as the date of the first edition, and Harvey himself refers in 1649 to something which he *will* shew in the *Generation of Animals*. So I think it must be a misprint; though the whole title page is different from the 1651 edition of Jansson which I have. Perhaps I may see the book when I come to Boston in October? I am making a journey with Dunhill, and we shall not omit to visit the Brigham. I am looking forward very much to seeing you. . .

Keynes arrived in Boston early in October, and since Cutter intended to come East at about that time, Cushing wired him to bring his unknown Harvey and join them at dinner.

The obscure bibliographical problem, however, was not settled at this meeting and more Harveian correspondence followed. It is difficult to decide who was the more adept bibliographer—Cushing or Cutter. On 18 October, in referring to the 1651 edition of the *De generatione* (Keynes' No. 37), Cutter writes:

"The paper of the title page does not appear to be the same as that of the first signature; in fact the quality of the paper changes two or three times throughout the volume. Furthermore, it does not appear to be a reset of the 1651 but a fairly early impression from the same type, inasmuch as many of the pages show less type wear than other copies."

In the same letter Dean Cutter mentions having found a catalogue of the Yale College Library printed in New Haven in 1823 which lists more than a hundred medical items, among them the first edition of Harvey's *De motu cordis*, 1628, and another item which did not appear in Keynes' bibliography. Cushing promptly referred this enquiry to Mr. Andrew Keogh, Librarian of the Yale University Library, who responded that Yale does in fact have a copy of the 1628 *De motu cordis* (bound up in a volume of Cotton Mather's sermons). He was careful to point out, however, that it had been bound a hundred years earlier by

another librarian. Keogh added that the Harvey items in question were also listed in a manuscript catalogue of the library prepared in 1742.

Exchanges of this sort between Cushing and Cutter continued until Cushing's death in 1939. The letters dealt largely with bibliographical matters, but the honorary degree which Northwestern conferred on Cushing in 1932 (probably at Dean Cutter's instigation) is also mentioned; likewise the various papers on which they were engaged. A few of the more interesting letters follow; since they are self-explanatory, they may be given without detailed comment.

H.C. to Irving S. Cutter *1 June 1929.*

Dear Cutter: How perfectly delightful of you to have sent me this copy of Cullingworth's essay on Charles White—an autographed copy at that! I hope you weren't robbing yourself. I shall treasure it highly for more than one reason.

I wish you would make it an annual affair to come on here and give us a paper. It was far and away the best thing we have had this year. Next time we will try and make it a little earlier so that we won't catch the students just at their examination period, which makes rather a slim meeting. I suppose the paper is going to the *Annals*, so that I may some day have a reprint of it to put on my shelves alongside this essay of Cullingworth's . . .

(Added in handwriting) Why not take up the Manchester group as a whole—White, Percival, Ferrier, Aiken *et al.*? It would make a delightful essay.

H.C. to Irving S. Cutter *3 July 1929.*

My dear Cutter: I can't tell you how delighted I am to receive this dedicatory volume of the Ward Memorial. It is admirably put together, as one would have expected it to be, having gone through your hands. And the ceremony of unveiling all these portraits of your heroes must have been a most interesting one. It was just like you to have gotten them together.

We have as many as eleven portraits of our past professors in our school building representing one hundred and ten years—that means about one a decade. And when some relative of an old and distinguished professor offered to present us with a portrait, a statement was made at a faculty meeting that we had no more room to hang portraits, and I think the offer was likely refused with regrets. The long and short of it is I think we had better try and get you on here as Dean, if you can ever be stolen away from your present delightful quarters, though I fear nothing would induce you to leave that magnificent library.

H.C. to Irving S. Cutter *25 April 1931.*

Dear Cutter: What a delightful bread-and-butter note! Your account of Middlebury makes me long to have been there with you so that I might have lapped up, as you have done, something of Edwin James' early days and to have gotten such a vivid picture of his youthful surroundings.

What a splendid story you are making of it! I shall look forward eagerly to seeing your final account in print.

I am just back from a brief visit to Baltimore attending a somewhat delayed 81st birthday party for Dr. Welch. I told him about your address here and he was much excited and I think they plan to get you down there next fall for some lectures at the Institute on the Western Migration of American Medicine. A series of papers on the frontier medical schools just at this time would probably lead to the unearthing of much information that might otherwise be lost.

I can't tell you what great delight you and Mrs. Cutter gave us in your visit and how pleased I am at your suggestion that we pay you a return visit some day in Chicago. This at least is something pleasant to look forward to.

With kind regards to you both in which all the family would join if they knew I were writing, I am, Most sincerely yours.

Cushing next wrote of his impending retirement, mentioning that Elliott Cutler was to succeed him in the Moseley Chair of Surgery at Harvard. To this Cutter replied:

Irving S. Cutter to H.C. *18 February 1932.*

. . . What a wonderful opportunity Cutler will have as compared with the situation that you faced some years ago. He is no doubt the most promising man of his age in surgical America.

I cannot view your retirement at Harvard with complacency. It will never be quite the same. Your influence on world medicine and particularly your stimulation of scientific ideals and accomplishments must continue with increasing power for many, many years.

It would be wonderful if you could see your way clear to go to Baltimore and there create a veritable Mecca for historically-minded pilgrims. Somehow or other I cannot see you retiring from surgery and any plan that you contemplate should incorporate in it two or three days of each week which you will devote to your chosen surgical field. Heaps of us depend upon you for that rare encouragement which only you can give.

H.C.'s answer was characteristic:

20 February 1932.

Dear Cutter: . . . It is pleasant of you to say such nice things about my small accomplishments and to lament my retirement. But it's about time I gave someone else the chance that I have had here, and I am sure that Cutler will

make as much of my job as anyone could. Perhaps my retirement from active surgery, if that is what it is going to be, will enable me to see a little more of my friends and play about with some historical matters with you and others.

Characteristic also was H. C.'s bread-and-butter letter to Mrs. Cutter after his honorary degree:

H. C. to Mrs. Irving S. Cutter *15 June 1932.*

Dear Mrs. Cutter: My long, tedious trip to Boston was brightened by the pleasantest possible memories of my all too brief sojourn with you in your delightful home. Irving has probably told you of the exciting Scandinavian afternoon and evening we had. And as I was practically alone in my car, I did not have to conceal the fact from anyone but the porter that I was reading the lurid journals which Dick handed on to me . . .

Early in the following year Dr. Cutter, in his keen search for needed information, sent out a questionnaire, probably without thought of the effect such a general request might have on his friends:

Irving S. Cutter to H.C. *1 February 1933.*

Dear Dr. Cushing: Please note the enclosed questionnaire. Naturally one section of my paper must deal with certain American private collections, medical in character, and I am wondering if you would let me have a description of your collection—its general character and something of its history.

As it happened, Cushing could not abide a questionnaire even from a close friend, but his reply to the letter is more than usually restrained. That he replied at all is a tribute to his high regard for a fellow bibliophile:

H.C. to Irving S. Cutter *14 February 1933.*

Dear Irving: Gracious, I wish I knew enough about my own library to be able to fill out your questionnaire! It has no name, and it has grown like Topsy out of nothing—topsy-turvy, I might say.

I haven't the slightest idea how many volumes I have, bound or unbound, and I wouldn't be hired to count them. It is wholly uncatalogued. There is no librarian, past or present, nor any employees if you will exclude Gus, the chauffeur, who acted upon the family's suggestion that my books be moved to another room while I was away; and I consequently know less about them now than before this happened.

The library is open (to domestic traffic) all day long and to me as a solace in the small hours of the night . . .

Irving S. Cutter to H.C. *6 March 1933.*

Dear Harvey: Your note of the fourteenth gave me a real thrill. I can see Gus—with deep mutterings carrying the precious volumes. You take a fearful risk as I am now compelled to write a brief description from memory.

I received a lot of interesting data in reply to my pernicious questionnaire. Interest in America in medical libraries has greatly increased within the last few years. They are for the most part, however, unorganized, and much of the material is unavailable. Now for some real scholar like yourself with some time and plenty of help.

I gave the talk on Edwin James recently in Denver. I have found a lot of new material and I am still hunting. The Medical Society of Denver has recently purchased Herbert Evans' collection.

H.C. to Irving S. Cutter *8 March 1933.*

Dear Irving: Thanks for your informing and amusing letter. But good heavens! Which collection has Herbert Evans now sold to the Medical Society of Denver—his science collection, his medico-historical collection, or what? And for how much? And is there a check-list of the books? I would like to know what he had.

And I wonder if it's the effect on him of the Rockefeller Institute, or hard times, or something else.

H.C. to Irving S. Cutter *21 April 1933.*

Dear Irving: I am simply delighted with your historical sketch of Midwifery and Gynaecology which has just reached me.[3] It purports to be full of meat and I can see some pleasant hours ahead so soon as I can get round to it. It promises to be in your very best style and covers a subject in which, as you know, I am deeply interested. I am sending you a few small skits of my own as a very feeble return. With warm regards to your family.

Irving S. Cutter to H.C. *20 September 1934.*

Dear Harvey: I have taken the gross liberty of reprinting your tribute to W. H. W(elch). It is too fine a thing to be buried and we need it for our students. Please forgive me.

H.C. to Irving S. Cutter *22 September 1934.*

Dear Irving: Nothing could have pleased me more or have complimented me more than to have had you copy that anonymous note of mine about Popsy. I hate to think that he is no longer here to give us consolation and comfort, not to say entertainment. Mrs. Cushing and I went to his interment and I was so moved by its simplicity that I wrote a little note about it which I am sending you, and indeed should have sent you before. I am also sending a paper, the basis of an address I gave in Syracuse in June. How historically correct it may be I cannot presume to say, but it was the best I could do with the subject largely from an invalid's chair and having people do the running for me in libraries and so on.

H.C. to Irving S. Cutter *5 January 1939.*

Dear Friend Cutter: Such a nice Christmas

[3] "Historical sketch of the development of midwifery and gynecology." *Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 1933, *1*, 4-194.

greeting from you! I hope you and yours are well and happy and trust that our ways may cross sometime in the present New Year. If you are ever in this neck of the woods, you will of course look me up and I shall hope to have a bibliophilic pow-wow with you of which I am greatly in need.

Since Dr. Cutter had followed the development of Dr. Cushing's library with such avid interest, it seems fitting that in a volume dedicated to his memory some reference should be made to the ultimate disposition of the Cushing holdings and to the plans that have been made for its future.

When left to an institution of learning, an important collection of books in any field should become, if wisely cared for, not only a great asset to the institution for its intrinsic worth but also a magnet to attract other important acquisitions. This has been true of the Cutter Library at Northwestern, for Dr. Cutter's friends have looked upon it as a privilege to fill some gap on his shelves. And Cushing's enthusiasm for creating a well-balanced collection covering the whole field of medicine and science inspired him to induce, with subtle persuasion, a number of his friends to add their entire libraries to his.

In a country as large as the United States, it is a healthy thing to have libraries and individual collectors competing with one another in building up their collections, and at Yale we are attempting to keep pace with Northwestern, the Welch Library at Baltimore, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Boston Medical Library, the New York Academy of Medicine, and several others, for we earnestly believe that such competition arouses interest, not only among students, but among the physicians of our respective communities. It also serves to encourage study, particularly among younger men, of the cultural background of our profession. All this is well exemplified in Cushing's and Cutter's rivalry in building up their Harvey collections, for it has resulted in two of the most complete that exist in this country.

When visiting the Osler Library in 1934, at the time of the dedication of the Montreal Neurological Institute, Cushing was profoundly impressed with the part which the Osler Library had begun to play in the life of the medical students and also of the faculty at McGill. On the train coming back to New Haven he made up his mind to leave his library to Yale University provided an appropriate building, preferably in the Medical School, could be made available to house his books. Opportunities of this sort come seldom to any institution, and it is to the great credit of the Yale Corporation that ways and means were ultimately found to build a new medical library for the Yale School of Medicine. Funds were not immediately forthcoming, but an architect was approached in the spring of 1935 (Mr. Grosvenor Atterbury of New York, Cushing's Yale classmate of the Class of '91), and in the course of the next four years various alternatives and plans were evolved. In July 1939 funds were appropriated. During that summer architectural plans were put into final form and, despite the outbreak of war in Europe, the Yale Architectural Plans Committee authorized the architect on 4 October 1939 to proceed with the building. On this day Cushing had a coronary attack, but he rallied for about forty-eight hours, and we were able to convey to him the welcome news that his dream for the library was soon to be realized.

The Yale Medical School was thus most fortunate not only in having obtained Cushing's great library, but also in having secured authorization for the purchase of steel and other building materials prior to the enforcement of wartime restrictions so that construction of the building to house the library could begin at once. The building was finished in less than two years, and was formally dedicated on 15 June 1941.

Dr. Cushing had made two stipulations to the architect: one, that the library be entered without the effort of climbing steps; and secondly, that the building be so planned that old books and modern textbooks would be equally accessible. Mr. Atterbury, catching the spirit of Dr. Cushing's request, proceeded—like the good Yale man that he is—to erect a Y-shaped building. In one limb of the Y, the General Medical Library, are housed modern books; in the second limb, the

Fig. 2. Interior of the Historical Library at the Yale University School of Medicine dedicated 15 June 1941, and containing the collections of Dr. Harvey Cushing.

Historical Library (fig. 2), are all the older texts together with modern works bearing on the history of medicine and science.

The building has several interesting features, particularly the Rotunda and the main room of the Historical Library. To commemorate Dr. Cushing's association with Yale and the part which he played in bringing the new Library into existence, the architect, with the enthusiastic support of the Class of 1891, suggested that the central exhibition hall, the so-called "Rotunda," be dedicated to the memory of their classmate. The Rotunda accordingly bears two appropriate inscriptions, one around the pediment of the balcony, the other over the entrance doorway:

This Rotunda is Dedicated to Harvey Cushing—
Inspiring Teacher—Pathfinder in Neurosurgery
—Master of the Science and Art of Healing

* * * *

The Class of Yale 1891
Have Contributed to this Rotunda
In Affectionate Memory of Their Classmate
HARVEY CUSHING
Born in Cleveland Ohio, 8 April 1869
Died in New Haven Connecticut, 7 October 1939

The historical reading room is a high-studded, two-story room lined on both sides with stained oak shelves lighted from the base of the balcony and from the balcony rail. Leading off the reading room, both at the balcony and ground levels, are study alcoves with small adjacent rooms designed for the housing of special collections, prints, MSS, etc., or for books being used by a scholar occupying the alcove study.

At the end of the historical reading room hangs a large portrait of Vesalius attributed to van Calcar which was bequeathed to the Library with Dr. Cushing's collection. Over the fireplace is inscribed in stone a prose poem written by a member of the Library's Advisory Board, the Reverend George Stewart. The text is as follows:

Here, silent, speak the great of other years,
the story of their steep ascent from the unknown
to the known, erring perchance in their best
endeavor, succeeding often, where to their
fellows they seemed most to fail;

Here, the distilled wisdom of the years,
the slow deposit of knowledge gained and writ
by weak, yet valorous men, who shirked not
the difficult emprize;

Here is offered you the record of their days
and deeds, their struggle to attain that light
which God sheds on the mind of man,
and which we know as Truth.

Unshared must be their genius; it was their own;
but you, be you but brave and diligent,
may freely take and know the rich
companionship of others' ordered thought.

Thus do the Historical Library at Yale and Cutter's great collection at Northwestern stand as lasting monuments to two physicians whose humanism caused them to bring the historical background of their profession closer to themselves and to the many who will follow in their tradition. They "live again in minds made better by their presence."